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# Ingroup Identification and Personality

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In this study, we examined the relationship between group identification with five social identities (i.e., 'global citizen', 'human', 'American', 'Texan', and 'student') and the Big Five dimensions of personality (agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, intellectualism/openness). Social identity perspective suggests that groups have distinctive and compartmentalized sets of values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors (Hogg & Smith, 2007). We proposed and found supportive evidence of the notion that personality can be conceptualized as another component of the groups' content. Results showed that the relationship between ingroup identification and personality differed by group. The results of the present study provide initial evidence and a novel proposition in the relatively unexplored area of social identity and personality research.

*Keywords*: social identity, Big Five personality, ingroup identification, group personality, global citizenship

Nous avons examiné la relation entre l'identification intragroupe et cinq identités sociales (c.-à-d., citoyen de la terre, humain, Américain, Texan et étudiant) ainsi que le modèle de la personnalité à cinq facteurs (agréabilité, esprit consciencieux, extraversion, stabilité émotionnelle, intellectualité/ouverture). La perspective de l'identité sociale suggère que les groupes ont des ensembles de valeurs, de normes, de croyances et de comportements qui sont distincts et catégorisés (Hogg & Smith, 2007). Nous avons proposé et trouvé des preuves appuyant la notion que la personnalité peut être conceptualisée comme une autre composante de la signification ou du contenu des groupes. Les résultats ont montré que la relation entre l'identification intragroupe et la personnalité différaient en fonction du groupe. Les résultats de la présente étude fournissent une première piste et une nouvelle thèse dans le domaine de recherche relativement inexploré de l'identité sociale et de la personnalité.

*Mots-clés* : modèle de la personnalité à cinq facteurs, personnalité de groupe, identité sociale, identification intragroupe, citoyenneté de la terre

Philosophers, intellectuals and scientific researchers alike have long attempted to answer the fundamental question regarding the source of consistent versus inconsistent behavior across time and situational context. Some psychology experts, mainly personality theorists, converged on the notion that the answer lies in individuals' innate personality, or characteristic traits that are relatively stable over time (e.g., Funder, 1997). Other psychologists, namely social identity theorists, de-emphasized the individualistic approaches to psychology, and instead sought to explain human behavior as a product of social contexts; as such, they highlight that individuals often experience profound pressure to conform to their group (Hogg & Williams, 2000). Among other points of disagreement, theorists from these two main camps fiercely debate the role of personality as either an individual difference that predicts behavior, or a product of dynamic social interactions between the person and his/her environment.

Social identity researchers suggest that personality can change depending on the situational context (Reynolds et al., 2010), while personality researchers argue that personality is relatively consistent across the lifespan (McCrae & Costa, 1999). The debate is exemplified by the strong reactions from personality psychologists to the suggestion that personality can change contextually (see open peer commentary following Reynolds et al., 2010). An integrative perspective of personality and social identity theorists has suggested that ingroup identification is itself a stable dimension of an individual's personality (Sagiv, Roccas, & Hazan, 2012).

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Thus, with respect to personality there exists (1) a mainstream individual-difference view that is promoted by personality psychologists, (2) a dynamic-interactionist view promoted by social identity researchers, and (3) Sagiv et al.'s (2012) notion that social identification is a form of personality.

In the present paper, consistent with Reynolds et al. (2010), we argue that personality is context dependent, and further suggest that an individual's personality can be viewed as a component of the content (or meaning) of the group (i.e., group personality). Finally, we examine the relationship between global citizenship (and other identities) and personality.

**Personality Perspective**

Personality is often defined as clusters of characteristics (i.e., thoughts, feelings, behaviors) or dimensions that are stable and enduring across the lifespan. According to the most widely researched and utilized model of personality, the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality include: intellect (e.g., open to new experiences, creative, intelligent), extraversion (e.g., sociable, gregarious, outgoing), conscientiousness (e.g., organized, deliberate, orderly), emotional stability (e.g., relaxed, imperturbable, undemanding), and agreeableness (e.g., trustful, cooperative, helpful) (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Tupes & Christal, 1961). Personality theorists consistently argue that across situations, and across the lifespan, personality is relatively stable (e.g., Costa, Herbst, McCrae, & Siegler, 2000). Accordingly, the Big Five dimensions are relatively unchanging, interpersonally distinctive aspects of the self that psychologists can use to predict behavior.

**Social Identity Perspective**

Social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) theories are often combined to explain intra- and inter-group processes (Hogg & Williams, 2000). Individuals can categorize themselves as group members and experience varying levels of psychological connections to the group (i.e., ingroup identification). According to social identity researchers, each group has a compartmentalized set of related group norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors. In other words, the values and norms of one group may differ from those of another group. An individual's identification with the group predicts adherence to the group's norms (Hogg & Smith, 2007). More recently, researchers have highlighted the importance of understanding the meaning (i.e., norms, values, attitudes) or content of group identities (Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Postmes & Jetten, 2006). For example, greater nationalism (identification with one's nation) predicts prejudice toward outgroups, but only when the content or norms of the group prescribes being prejudiced toward those outgroups (Livingstone & Haslam, 2008; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009). Conversely, a group norm of tolerance and pro-social behaviors predicts helping behaviors when one strongly identifies with the salient group identity (Armenta, Knight, Carlo, & Jacobson, 2011; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). Taken together, the social identity perspective suggests that individuals will follow their group's normative content (e.g., values, beliefs, behaviors) when the group identity is salient and when they highly identify with the group.

Social identity researchers suggest that an individual's personality can change depending on the social context, the social identity that is salient, his/her degree of ingroup identification, and his/her group's norms (Reynolds et al., 2010). Reynolds and colleagues (2010) describe a preliminary study where participants reported less emotional stability when one of three different identities was made salient. Thus, they suggest that personality can change depending on the identity that is salient at any given time.

**Integrative Perspective**

Sagiv et al. (2012) recently examined a third perspective regarding the link between social identity and personality. They suggest that identification with a group (i.e., degree of psychological connection with a group) is a dimension of personality. They also propose that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability correlate with ingroup identification, regardless of the group identity that is salient. In effect, these researchers suggest that a specific combination of personality traits lead individuals to be more identified with groups (again, regardless of the type of group). The researchers argue that this stable individual difference that results in a tendency to highly identify with groups is resistant to contextual changes. In other words, high group identification results from a specific "type" of personality, and one's psychological connection with the group is stable across time and situation. However, Sagiv et al. (2012) found a group

(business students) that does not display their own suggested correlation trend. In other words, Sagiv and colleagues do not exclusively find the trend they hypothesize in their integrative perspective.

### Three Perspectives of Personality

The three perspectives of personality described in the present paper hold important implications for how we view the role of personality in predicting behavior. If personality is relatively stable across the lifespan, as personality researchers propose, then one would show the same personality characteristics across all situations. For example, an agreeable person would be agreeable in every context, even during an argument with a rival group member. If personality is malleable, as social identity researchers suggest, then the manner by which an individual behaves will depend on an interaction between him/her (e.g., past experiences, identification with the group) and the environment (e.g., situation, comparative outgroup). If we follow the social identity perspective, the personality characteristics that an individual displays will change as he/she encounters different contexts (e.g., being introverted in the classroom in contrast to behaving in an extroverted way with friends). If we subscribe to Sagiv et al.'s (2012) view of personality, the more agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable an individual, the more likely she/he is to highly identify with a group. Following this perspective, a careless (i.e., not conscientious) individual would be unlikely to identify strongly with any group.

To summarize, three perspectives have been suggested in the literature regarding the roles of, and association between, personality and the psychological connection with social groups: personality, social identity, integrative. Following the initial findings of Reynolds and colleagues (2010), we argue that personality is context dependent, but we further suggest that personality can be viewed as a component of the group content. In other words, just as social identities have an associated set of attitudes, norms, and behaviors, personality may represent a reflection of the group's normative content. Greater identification with a group will be related to greater adherence to the group's content (i.e., norms, values, behaviors), and individuals' emotions, values, norms, and personality will vary depending on the identity that is salient (and the immediate social context). In this view, personality represents clusters of traits, behaviors that represent these traits, and behaviors that represent the contents of groups with which one identifies. Therefore, the notion that personality may represent another component of the content of group identities integrates both perspectives and remains consistent with the social identity perspective. For example, the identity of global citizens may contain norms of openness to others (i.e., openness to new experiences), while the identity of students may include behavioral norms of joining clubs and meeting new people (i.e., extraversion).

In the present study we examine whether the relationship between group identification and different dimensions of personality depends on particular group contents; furthermore, we explore the group personality of global citizens.

### Content of Identities

According to the social identity perspective, groups have compartmentalized sets of values, attitudes, and norms that represent the group's content (Hogg & Smith, 2007). In a series of studies Reysen, Pierce, Spencer and Katzarska-Miller (2012) examined the content of global citizenship identity in relation to other identities (i.e., human, American, Texan, and student). Across multiple studies, 'global citizenship' consistently positively correlated with pro-social values (e.g., openness to meeting others from diverse backgrounds, social justice). Furthermore, global citizenship identification differed from human identity in that identification with a human category was non-significantly related to pro-social values. American identification related to valuing consumerism and feeling uncomfortable with diverse others, while global citizenship identification was unrelated to consumerism and was related positively to valuing diversity. Similar to the American identity, identification with Texans negatively correlated with valuing diversity. The student identification showed similar, but weaker, correlations with pro-social values as compared to global citizenship. Lastly, American and student identification was positively related to hedonism and conformity, while global citizenship was unrelated to these values. Overall, this research suggests that different groups have different contents, and the degree of ingroup identification is related to the extent to which one endorses the group's normative content (e.g., values, behaviors).

### Current Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between group identification and personality. Participants in this study completed measures of

the Big Five personality dimensions, and also indicated their degree of identification with five social identities (global citizen, human, American, Texan, student). Prior research has shown that identification with different groups is related to distinct values (Katzarska-Miller, Barnsley, & Reysen, 2012; Reysen, Pierce, Katzarska-Miller, & Nesbit, 2012). Accordingly to the social identity perspective (Hogg & Smith, 2007), greater ingroup identification is associated with distinct values because the meaning or content of the group is different (e.g., global citizen was shown to relate to openness, while U.S. and Texan identification related to exclusion). Prior research has also shown that self-reported personality can differ depending on which social identity is salient (Reynolds et al., 2010). Together, these studies suggest that a group has norms and values that are uniquely associated with that specific group (i.e., the content of the group), and that greater identification with the group predicts adherence to those norms when the social identity is salient.

If personality were a relatively stable set of characteristics, then we should find similar correlational patterns between ingroup identification and personality, regardless of the content of the group identity. Conversely, if identification is itself a personality dimension, as argued by Sagiv et al. (2012), then we should find ingroup identification correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, regardless of the content of group identity. According to past research (Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012; Reysen, Pierce, Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012), we propose that personality can be viewed as a portion of the content of specific group identities. Indeed, Reynolds et al. (2010) describe research that shows personality to differ depending on the salience of group membership. Thus, if personality is a component of the group norm, then we should find personality dimensions correlating differently depending on the group. We hypothesize that the associations between personality and ingroup identification will differ for each group assessed. Specifically, we hypothesize that 'global citizen' identity, 'human' identity, 'American' identity, 'Texan' identity and 'student' identity will show different personality patterns.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Five hundred and ninety undergraduate psychology students (69.5% women) were recruited from the psychology participant pool to complete the present online survey, with the compensation of partial credit toward a class. Participants' mean age was 23.41 (*SD* = 7.71). Participants indicated their racial/ethnic categories as European American (63.9%), African American (21.7%), Hispanic (7.3%), Multiracial (2.7%), Indigenous Peoples (1.5%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (1.5%), Central Asian/Indian/Pakistani (0.5%), Arab/Middle Eastern (0.5%), and other (0.3%). Participants completed measures of the Big Five personality, the degree of identification with five social identities, and demographic items.

### Materials

Self-reported personality was assessed using 50 items from the international personality item pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). The measure contains five 10-item subscales to assess participants' degree of extraversion (α = .87), agreeableness (α = .78), conscientiousness (α = .81), emotional stability (α = .86), and intellect (α = .78) (alphas reported for the personality subscales are from the present study).

Participants' degree of ingroup identification with 'global citizen', 'human', 'American', 'Texan', and 'student' social identities was assessed with a single item ("I strongly identify with [*insert group*]") scale (Reysen, Pierce, Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012). Past research has shown the single item scale to be significantly positively correlated with numerous multidimensional and univariate ingroup identification scales, and shown to be reliable (across-time correlations between .71 to .86) for different group memberships (Reysen, Pierce, Katzarska-Miller et al., 2012).

Personality items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *very inaccurate* to 5 = *very accurate*), and the ingroup identification items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Lastly, three items assessed participants' gender, age, and ethnicity.

## Results

### Correlations

In order to examine the relationships between group identification and personality, we conducted partial correlations controlling for participants' age, gender, and ethnicity. Table 1 shows correlations between the assessed variables, and descriptive

Table 1
*Partial Correlations between Ingroup Identification and Personality*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Global Citizen | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Human | .21** | - | | | | | | | | |
| 3. American | .12** | .46** | - | | | | | | | |
| 4. Texan | .12** | .31** | .58** | - | | | | | | |
| 5. Student | .22** | .26** | .41** | .45** | - | | | | | |
| 6. Extraversion | .04 | .12** | .13** | .14** | .16** | - | | | | |
| 7. Agreeableness | .16** | .24** | .13** | .10* | .16** | .23** | - | | | |
| 8. Conscientiousness | .14** | .07 | .14** | .11** | .19** | .02 | .17** | - | | |
| 9. Emotional Stability | .11* | .08 | .09* | .11* | .09* | .14* | .17** | .23** | - | |
| 10. Intellectualism/Openness | .20** | .11* | .03 | .02 | .04 | .23** | .40** | .22** | .05 | - |
| Mean | 4.38 | 6.20 | 6.00 | 5.78 | 5.04 | 3.23 | 4.04 | 3.64 | 3.11 | 3.71 |
| Standard Deviation | 1.50 | 1.20 | 1.30 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 0.77 | 0.55 | 0.63 | 0.80 | 0.54 |

*Note*. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Controlling for participant age, gender, and ethnicity.

statistics (means and standard deviations) are displayed at the bottom of the table. Global citizenship identification was positively correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellectualism/openness. Identification with humans was positively associated with extraversion, agreeableness, and intellectualism. American and Texan identification was positively correlated with each of the Big Five dimensions excluding intellectualism. Student identification was positively associated with extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

## Regressions

In order to examine the unique influence of each identity in predicting the Big Five dimensions we conducted five regression analyses. We simultaneously entered identification with each of the groups (independent variables) predicting each of the Big Five dimensions (dependent variable) while controlling for participants' age, gender, and ethnicity. Participants' age, gender (1 = male, 2 = female), and ethnicity (1 = White, 2 = Non-White) were entered simultaneously with the identification measures in the regressions. While the sample's demographic characteristics were not a focus of the present study, results showed that participants' demographics differentially predicted self-reported Big Five personality dimensions: extraversion (age: $\beta = -.06$, $p = .182$; gender: $\beta = -.07$, $p = .099$; ethnicity: $\beta = -.04$, $p = .318$), agreeableness (age: $\beta = .05$, $p = .239$; gender: $\beta = .18$, $p < .001$; ethnicity: $\beta = -.08$, $p = .051$), conscientiousness (age: $\beta = .12$, $p = .003$; gender: $\beta = .05$, $p = .253$; ethnicity: $\beta = .03$, $p = .502$), emotional stability (age: $\beta = .10$, $p = .013$; gender: $\beta = -.27$, $p < .001$; ethnicity: $\beta = .05$, $p = .236$), intellectualism/openness (age: $\beta = -.11$, $p = .005$; gender: $\beta = -.17$, $p < .001$; ethnicity: $\beta = -.09$, $p = .035$). As shown in Table 2, global citizenship identification predicted greater agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellectualism/openness. Greater 'human' identification predicted greater agreeableness. 'American' and 'Texan identification did not significantly predict the Big Five dimensions beyond the other identities. 'Student' identification predicted greater extraversion and conscientiousness.

Table 2
*Ingroup Identification Predicting Personality*

| Variable | Global | Human | American | Texan | Student | $R^2$ | *F(8, 570)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraversion | -.00 | .07 | .03 | .05 | .11* | .04 | 3.15* |
| Agreeableness | .10* | .19** | -.01 | -.01 | .09 | .12 | 9.68*** |
| Conscientiousness | .10* | -.03 | .08 | .00 | .14** | .07 | 5.13*** |
| Emotional Stability | .09* | .02 | .02 | .07 | .02 | .10 | 7.90*** |
| Intellectualism/Openness | .18** | .08 | -.01 | -.02 | -.01 | .08 | 6.40*** |

*Note.* * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.
Standardized betas are reported. Controlling for participant age, gender, and ethnicity.

Thus, regardless of the participants' age, gender, and ethnicity, 'global citizenship' identification predicted self-reported agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellectualism/openness beyond the other identities ('human', 'American', Texan', 'student'). In addition, the more individuals identify with the 'human' group, the more they view themselves as being agreeable. Lastly, greater identification with other university students predicted more self-reported extraversion and conscientiousness, even when controlling for demographic variables and including the other identities in the analyses.

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between ingroup identification and personality. We suggested that personality is a component of the group's normative content, and therefore, proposed that personalities would differ depending on the salient group (i.e., group personality). In support of our prediction, the pattern of associations between ingroup identification and personality differed by group.

The debate between social identity and personality researchers focuses on the stability versus fluidity of personality when contexts change. Personality researchers argue that personality is relatively stable across situations and over time (e.g., Costa et al., 2000), while social identity researchers argue that personality changes depending on the context, the salient social identity, ingroup identification, and group norms (Reynolds et al., 2010). Sagiv and colleagues (2012) posit that group identification is a personality factor. The present study does not directly examine whether personality is an enduring individual difference; however, the results provide initial evidence of a link between personality and ingroup identification. Therefore, the stability of an individual's personality may be dependent on the extent to which he/she identifies with the corresponding group. The results are consistent with the social identity perspective (Reynolds et al., 2010) because the patterns of association between personality and ingroup identification differ by group, suggesting that personality is a product of the group with which one identifies. The results are contrary to Sagiv et al.'s (2012) argument that ingroup identification is in itself a personality trait. Using a methodology similar to one used by Sagiv and colleagues (2012), we found the correlations between agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability to be inconsistently related to ingroup identification with various social identities. In line with social identity perspective and Reynolds et al.'s (2010) argument, the results support our hypothesis that personality is a part of the group's content.

The results hold interesting implications for personality and social identity research. Group members (especially highly identified group members) conform to their group norms, attitudes, and behaviors (Armenta et al., 2011; Jetten et al., 1997; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008). Furthermore, prior research has suggested (Reysen & Branscombe, 2008), and found (see Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008), that group members will also shift their emotional experiences to conform to the salient group norm. Our proposition that personality is also a component of the group norms suggests that an essential way in which group members may conform to group norms is by adopting the corresponding group personality. For example, if one is a highly identified global citizen, when that identity is salient one may show greater emotional stability in a hectic situation (as compared to when a student identity was salient). However, group personality may not influence one's actions in situations when the immediate social context prescribes that a different salient identity (e.g., the student identity in the above example), or when one does not strongly identify with the group (e.g., global citizen in the above example), or finally when the normative personality of the group has changed over time. Future research should examine whether group members will shift their self-rated personality following information that prototypical members of the group express different levels of personality traits. Furthermore, our results suggest that group personality may affect intergroup relations (Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). For example, an individual may change how he/she interacts with an outgroup member based on his/her perception of the outgroup's personality.

The results also hold larger implications for the individual within the group. More specifically, does the individual influence the group, or does the group influence the individual? Taylor (1997, 2002) suggests that culture provides a template for the individual, and as such, a person's personal identity is built on the foundations of his cultural identity. In a similar way, the present results suggest that an important aspect of a person (i.e., his/her personality) is also influenced by the group with which that individual identifies. However, following the integrative perspective we avoid this dichotomous argument. Instead we suggest that the interaction between individuals within groups

shape the content (including personality) of the group, and simultaneously shape those who are embedded in those groups.

According to a mutual constitution theory of culture (see Adams & Markus, 2004), individuals within groups have agency to dynamically construct the group's content, and through engagement with the group, they actively produce, reproduce, and modify normative group patterns that serve to condition and influence others embedded in the group. For example, if an individual highly identifies with the group of global citizens, he/she may come to embody those patterns of personality (i.e., open-mindedness) over normative patterns associated with identities that are less frequently salient. While culture is not necessarily tied to groups, the formation of group content is similar to the mutual constitution of culture and psyche (except in this example we are referring to the mutual constitution of group and individual). Thus, while individuals have agency to shape the group's personality, interacting with the group has a reciprocal influence of shaping the individual's personality.

**Limitations and Conclusions**

The present study has several limitations, and therefore the results should be interpreted with caution. First, the design of the current study was correlational in nature. Future researchers should randomly assign participants various salient identities and measure self-reported personality. According to Reynolds and colleagues (2010), personality shifts depending on group salience, comparative context, and the participant's degree of identification with the group. Despite the correlational nature of the data, our results support our hypothesis of individuals' personality as a component of their group's content.

Secondly, the present study consisted of undergraduate college students. Other populations (e.g., cultural, generational) may produce different results. Thirdly, the correlations found between personality and identity ranged between small and medium. Particularly with the large sample size obtained in the present study, caution should be taken when interpreting the smaller correlations and regression betas found in the results.

Lastly, we assessed identification with multiple groups simultaneously after participants rated their personality, whereas Sagiv et al. (2012) assessed one identity for each independent group of participants. Participants may have felt pressure to change their rating of ingroup identification for each group. However, prior research (Reysen et al., 2012) has found that changing the number of identities assessed at one time, or the order of assessment, is relatively unrelated to the pattern of results between identification and endorsed values.

In the present study we examined the relationship between ingroup identification with various groups and the Big Five-personality model. The association between ingroup identification and the Big Five factors of personality differed by group. The findings do not support prior research, which suggests that ingroup identification is a personality trait in itself (Sagiv et al., 2012). Instead, our findings support the notion that personality is a component of the group content. Empirical research examining the association between group membership and personality remains relatively unexplored. The present study offers initial evidence, and the novel proposition to conceptualize personality as a reflection of the group normative content. Viewing personality as a component of the group's content integrates both personality and social identity perspectives in a dynamic interactionist approach.

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